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## **Celebrating Juneteenth, Cruz Companies recommits to community service & stewardship**

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Shown (from left) are: John B Cruz III and Justin Cruz

Boston, MA One of the country's oldest and largest Black-owned construction and real estate enterprises, Cruz Companies, has announced its support and involvement in a range of regional initiatives and community activities on the occasion of Juneteenth.

Honoring the end of slavery in the United States and celebrating culture, history and pride for Black communities across the country, Cruz Companies is marking Juneteenth by adding to its legacy of core business initiatives that drive action and change by advancing diversity across the real estate and construction industries. Cruz Companies also commemorates Juneteenth 2023 with an expanded commitment to heritage organizations and local advocacy groups, highlighting the tremendous contributions of Black-led organizations and enterprises.

"Juneteenth offers a meaningful and memorable occasion to reaffirm our beliefs about real estate development and construction for the advancement of housing, betterment of communities, and mentorship of tomorrow's leaders," said Justin Cruz, chief operating officer of Cruz Companies. "Investments in new housing, from Massachusetts to Maryland, should provide economic opportunities for the people in every community," he adds, including:

- Increasing affordable housing offerings.
- Creating opportunity for area residents and other minority businesses.
- Making cities and towns more sustainable through economic development.

Through Cruz CARES, the Cruz Companies social responsibility arm, the organization has also elevated a range of new commitments for 2023 in honor of Juneteenth. They include sponsoring the annual Juneteenth Celebration at Franklin Park – also known as the Roxbury Homecoming, which has been celebrated since 1996. The Saturday, June 17 open-air event draws thousands of residents and visitors for barbecue, music and dancing, and reminiscing about decades of history in Roxbury, the neighborhood often called "the heart of Black culture in Boston."

Other area programs slated for Cruz CARES in 2023 include a resident Thanksgiving dinner at a Cruz property for seniors, the 41-unit Sarah Baker Manor Apartments, and distribution of holiday turkey and ham gift bags at two other affordable housing locations, the Wayne at Franklin Hill apartments and the Taurus Apartments, the latter hailed as a model development multiple times since it was built over 50 years ago.

Cruz CARES stands for Community, Arts, Recreational and Educational Services, and the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization has a mission of helping urban communities throughout the region. Since its inception, Cruz CARES has hosted after-school programs, summer camps, college scholarships, resident field trips and a youth holiday celebration. Programs slated for Cruz CARES in 2023 include an annual bike/swim event on Martha's Vineyard, a back-to-school backpack giveaway, and a 5K run and walk-a-thon fundraiser in October.

Emphasizing the heritage of Cruz Companies' founders, who were first-generation emigrants from

the Cape Verde Islands, the firm's executives also support a number of community organizations and events including the Cape Verdean Association in New Bedford and the Annual Cape Verdean Independence Day Festival.

As for Cruz Companies, including its construction, management and development businesses, the firm is recognized widely for its support of other minority business enterprises.

"In all our work, we believe in contributing to better business ecosystems that break down the structural obstacles today's Black business owners continue to face today," says John Cruz III, CEO of Cruz Companies. "On Juneteenth, we take this occasion as an opportunity to reflect and to restate our enduring commitment to community-focused businesses, which allow for wealth creation for those enterprises as well as for the many people who work with them."

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